

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 1, 2000

Students will “GEAR UP” for college with new program in Quincy

OLYMPIA – State higher education leaders today announced that Quincy has been selected as a site for a national early intervention scholarship program.

The GEAR UP Scholars Project will help up to 650 students in Grant County go to college. Students will visit college campuses and receive academic advising, leadership training, tutoring, and mentoring. About 150 low-income students, or Scholars, will be able to earn scholarships, for up to four years of study at any accredited college or university in the state.

“We want young people to understand that, if they work hard, they *can* go to college,” said Marc Gaspard, Executive Director of the State Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB).

The HECB administers the state GEAR UP Scholars Project, in partnership with the Office of the Governor and the University of Washington.

GEAR UP Program Associate John McLain said that the small eastern Washington town was a natural choice for the GEAR UP project. “The Quincy community has an impressive history of pulling together and building strong partnerships to help young people,” he said. “This rock-solid community support will be essential to helping GEAR UP students succeed.”

State leaders plan to kick off the program in June and are working closely with Quincy School District staff to identify potential students and a local partner. The program will focus primarily on students who will enter Quincy Junior High School in the fall.

Quincy School District Superintendent Michael Sowder applauded GEAR UP’s focus on reaching students early with the message that college is possible. “College is within the reach of all students, if they plan ahead and work hard,” he said.

Sowder urged students, parents, teachers and others who would like to learn more about the program to call Evon LaGrou, Vocational Director at Quincy High School, at 509/787-3501.

Local organizations interested in partnering with the state to manage the program are invited to submit a proposal to the HECB by May 26. The HECB will hold a bidders conference on May 12 from 10 to 11:30 a.m. at Quincy High School, 16 6th Avenue S.E. The Request for Proposals is available on the HECB Web site at www.hecb.wa.gov or by calling Adrienne Gardner at 360/586-2849.

Quincy will be the eighth community in Washington State to participate in the GEAR UP Scholars Project. The program currently serves students in Aberdeen, Hoquiam, Elma, Inchelium, Spokane, Tacoma and Wapato and will expand next month to serve students in four more communities, including Quincy.

GEAR UP stands for “Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs.”

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